



## Planning in the Tuolumne Area

*Learning about planning in a place as large and complex as Yosemite National Park requires an understanding of the different types of planning documents, their relationship to each other, and their relationship to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The following helps to explain how current planning efforts in the Tuolumne area fit into Yosemite's larger planning picture.*

### What kinds of plans are there, and how do they differ?

Planning in Yosemite National Park takes two different forms: general management planning and implementation planning.

General management plans are long- range plans for a specific national park area. As the broadest level of decision making for a park, general management plans focus on why the park was created and what resource conditions and visitor experiences should exist, but do not go into detail about how to accomplish those conditions and experiences. Yosemite's 1980 *General Management Plan* articulates the park's mission and overall direction for planning throughout the park. It is a guidance document that aims to achieve five broad goals: reclaim priceless beauty, allow natural processes to prevail, promote visitor understanding and enjoyment, reduce traffic congestion, and reduce crowding.

Implementation plans, which tier off of the general management plan, focus on how to implement an activity or project to achieve a long- term goal. Implementation plans may direct specific projects as well as ongoing management activities or programs, and provide a high level of detail and analysis. The *Yosemite Valley Plan* is an example of an implementation plan.

Over the course of the next two years, both levels of planning will be taking place in the Tuolumne area as planning gets underway for the *Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* (Tuolumne River Plan), *Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*.

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### What is the Tuolumne River Plan?

In 1984, Congress designated approximately 83 miles of the Tuolumne River as a Wild and Scenic River. This included 54 miles of the river under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park. In accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Park Service must prepare a comprehensive management plan to guide future decisions in the river corridor. The *Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* (Tuolumne River Plan) EIS will evaluate a range of alternatives that present the management direction for protecting the free- flowing condition and unique values of the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park.

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### How does the Tuolumne River Plan fit in?

In the National Park Service, a river management plan is on the same level as a general management plan. Thus, the Tuolumne River Plan will work side- by- side as a companion document to the park's *General Management Plan*. Drawing its management authority from the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Tuolumne River Plan will actually amend portions of the *General Management Plan* as they relate to land use planning and user capacity in the Tuolumne River corridor.

Like the *General Management Plan*, the Tuolumne River Plan will guide decisions and on- the- ground actions in future implementation plans, such as the upcoming Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan.

## What type of planning will occur in the Tuolumne area?

From the headwaters at Mt. Lyell and Mt. Dana to the park's boundary near Groveland, the Tuolumne River Plan will lay out the vision and framework for management within the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River corridor. The Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan will implement the goals laid out in the Tuolumne River Plan and the *General Management Plan* specific to the Tuolumne Meadows area. The concept plan will present the specifics details relating to the presence and location of individual buildings and services within the meadows area.

The National Park Service is adopting a phased approach to these two planning processes. The Tuolumne River Plan will be initiated first, since management elements (such as user capacity and establishing desired resource and visitor experience conditions) will need to be established before addressing the Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan. The Concept Plan will then begin while the River Plan is underway, in order to capitalize on the data and expertise that are being assembled for that process and to maximize staff and the public's time and effort. Together, these two planning efforts will be called the *Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan, Tuolumne Meadow Concept Plan and EIS*.

Implementation plans and actions affecting the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River, such as the Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan, must be consistent with the management guidance presented in both the *General Management Plan* goals and the management elements contained in the Tuolumne River Plan.

## What is NEPA and how does it affect park planning?

NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act. It was authorized by Congress in 1969 to ensure that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before actions are taken. NEPA provides procedures both for preparing environmental documents and for involving the public. It requires informed decision-making, but otherwise does not prescribe outcomes of planning efforts. Recognizing the strength and comprehensiveness that a broad array of ideas infuses into the planning process, The National Park Service in Yosemite has committed to going beyond the statutory requirements of NEPA to provide frequent and diverse opportunities for public involvement.

All NEPA compliance for the Tuolumne Meadows Concept Plan is expected to be covered in the Tuolumne River Plan.

## PLANNING IN YOSEMITE

